

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3554

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJ: SYRIAN PRESS COMMENTARY ON LEBANESE CRISIS

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN PRESS HAS GIVEN FRONT-PAGE ATTENTION TO LEBANESE CRISIS AND FOCUSED ON SYRIAN EFFORTS, ULTIMATELY SUCCESSFUL, TO MEDIATE CONFLICT. EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS EMPHASIZED SYRIAN CONCERN TO PROTECT PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT AND PRESERVE LEBANESE POLITICAL STABILITY. END SUMMARY.

2. YARUB AL-SAYYID, COLUMNIST FOR AL-THAWRAH, WROTE MAY 24 THAT "CONSPIRATORS WANT LEBANON TO DROWN IN CONFUSION FROM WHICH IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO EMERGE WITHOUT DEEP AND PAINFUL RUPTURES IN PALESTINIAN-ARAB RELATIONS WHICH WOULD LEAVE NEGATIVE TRACES ON ENTIRE ARAB POSITION." AL-SAYYID EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT PROGRESSIVE LEBANESE MASSES WOULD "FOIL CONSPIRACIES THAT HURT LEBANON AND ITS RELATIONS WITH PALESTINIANS

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AND FRATERNAL ARAB COUNTRIES."

3. AL-BAATH MAY 25 BANNERED "FORMATION OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT CREATES ACCUTE POLITICAL CRISIS. MESSAGE FROM ASAD TO FRANJIEH. NATIONALIST FORCES CONSIDER FORMATION OF GOVERNMENT AS GRAVE PRECEDENT AND VIOLATION OF DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS." ARTICLE NOTED MAY 24 MEETING INCLUDING FONMIN KHADDAM AND DEP DEFMIN NAJI JAMIL ON SYRIAN SIDE AND PRESIDENT FRANJIEH, FONMIN DAHDAH AND KAMAL JUMBLATT WHICH LASTED FROM 7:00 P.M. TO MIDNIGHT. ALSO MENTIONED THAT ASAD AT 2:00P.M. RECEIVED PALESTINIAN DELEGATION COMPOSED OF KHALID AL-FAHUM, SAMI ATTARI, KHALIL AL-WAZIR, ABD AL-AZIZ AL-WAJIH, MAHMUD ABBAS, ISAM ABD AL-LATIF, AND TALAL NAJI. SYRIAN SIDE INCLUDED KHADDAM, JAMIL AND COS SHIHABI. TWO SIDES "EXCHANGED VIEWS CONCERNING CURRENT SITUATION IN LEBANON". AL-BAATH IN ANOTHER ARTICLE REPORTED THAT PROGRESSIVE LEBANESE FORCES "UNANIMOUSLY" AGREED TO WORK FOR FALL OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND FORMATION OF "NEW NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT." AL-BAATH ALSO REPORTED VIEWS OF VARIOUS LEBANESE POLITICIANS CALLING FOR RESIGNATION OF CABINET, AS WELL AS STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THESE AIMS BY LEADERS OF SUNNI, SHIA AND DRUZE COMMUNITIES. ARTICLE NOTED THAT ONLY SUPPORT FOR MILITARY GOVERNMENT CAME FROM FORMER PRESIDENT CHAMOUN "KNOWN FOR HIS CHAUVINISM" AND PIERRE GEMAYEL "HEAD OF THE GANGS OF FASCIST PHALANGE."

4. SYRIAN PRESS FOCUSED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY MAY 26 ON LEBANESE CRISIS AND SYRIAN EFFORTS TO RESOLVE IT. HIGHLIGHTED WAS STATEMENT THAT "DUE TO EFFORTS EXERTED BY SYRIAN DELEGATION LED BY FONMIN KHADDAM", CLASHES CEASED AND JOINT PATROLS WERE UNDERTAKEN. PRESS STATED KHADDAM AND JAMIL MET FOR THREE HOURS AFTERNOON MAY 25 WITH PALESTINIAN DELEGATION LED BY ARAFAT FOLLOWING MORNING MEETING AT BAABDA WITH CHAMOUN AND GEMAYEL AND SEPARATE MEETING WITH FRANJIEH. REPORT ADDED THAT KHADDAM AND JAMIL HELD ANOTHER MEETING WITH FRANJIEH BEGINNING AT 10:30 P.M. MAY 25. PRESS REPORTED THAT IT HAD "LEARNED FROM RELIABLE SOURCE" THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD OFFER ITS RESIGNATION TO PREISDENT FRANJIEH WITHIN FEW HOURS "IN VIEW OF HOSTILITY IT ENCOUNTERED FROM LEBANESE UNCLASSIFIED

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PROGRESSIVE FORCES." AL-BAATH ALSO REPORTED THAT MARONITE PATRIARCH JOINED RANKS OF OPPONENTS OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT. DETAILS WERE PROVIDED ON CLASHES AS WELL AS IMPLEMENTATION OF CEASEFIRE ARRANGED THROUGH SYRIAN MEDIATION.

5. MAY 27 PRESS EMPHASIZED SUCCESS OF SYRIAN MEDIATION, PROBABLE FORMATION OF NEW CABINET UNDER KARAMI, AND PRESIDENT ASAD'S CONCERN FOR LEBANON AND SAFETY

OF PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT. KHADDAM'S BEIRUT PRESS
CONFERENCE WAS REPORTED, INCLUDING REMARK THAT "WE
SUCCEEDED IN REACHING COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN
PLO AND LEBANESE OFFICIALS. ALL PARTIES HAVE COMMITTED
THEMSELVES TO IMPLEMENT ACCORD."

AL-THAWRAH EDITOR ALI SULAYMAN OPINED THAT "LEBANESE
CRISIS IS OVER, AND OUR COUNTRY DID ITS NATIONAL DUTY
IN CONTRIBUTING TO SETTLEMENT OF CRISIS." HE ADDED
THAT "SYRIAN CONSIDERS ANYTHING AFFECTING LEBANON AND
RESISTANCE AS AFFECTING SYRIA DIRECTLY." HE CONCLUDED
WITH REFERENCE TO PHALANGE: "WE SHOULD NOT PERMIT
ANY MISGUIDED FACTION TO CONTINUE FABRICATING CRISES
THAT ONLY BENEFIT ZIONIST ENEMY."
MURPHY

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